UNITED
NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/48/689
29 November 1993

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Forty-eighth session
Agenda item 91

DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION

Progress in the implementation of General Assembly resolution 47/181

Note by the Secretary-General

CONTENTS

		Paragraphs	Page
I.	INTRODUCTION	1 - 3	2
II.	REPLIES RECEIVED FROM MEMBER STATES	4 - 19	2
	A. Agenda for development as an instrument for integrating new areas of consensus	9 - 14	3
	B. Agenda for development as an instrument for enhancing coordination within the United Nations system	15 - 19	4
III.	SOME APPROACHES AND THEMES TO BE PURSUED IN AN AGENDA FOR DEVELOPMENT	20 - 41	6

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The purpose of the present note is to provide information on progress in the implementation of General Assembly resolution 47/181 of 22 December 1992, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General, in consultation with Member States, to prepare an agenda for development for submission to it at its forty-eighth session.

2. Accordingly, the note provides information on the replies received from Member States in response to the Secretary-General's note verbale of 20 May 1993, eliciting views on an Agenda for Development. It also contains initial indications, in the light of these replies, as well as consultations within the Secretariat and with the organizations of the United Nations system, including at the recent session of the Administrative Committee on Coordination on 28 and 29 October 1993, as to some of the approaches and broad themes which the Secretary-General would propose to pursue in an Agenda for Development It is hoped that this information will facilitate an open and wide-ranging debate in the meetings of the current session of the General Assembly to be devoted to this subject. The views expressed in the debate will be drawn upon in pursuing ongoing work in the preparation of the report on an Agenda for Development requested by the Assembly.

3. As far as the timetable for the issuance of the report is concerned, in the note verbale referred to above, the Secretary-General indicated that the complexity of the issues to be addressed in an Agenda for Development required a longer time-frame for its elaboration than that envisaged in General Assembly resolution 47/181. This view was generally shared by Member States in their replies to the note verbale. It is therefore the intention of the Secretary-General to issue the report requested in General Assembly resolution 47/181 in the early months of 1994. In that light, it is proposed, for the Assembly's consideration, that an item on the subject be included in the agendas of the Economic and Social Council in 1994 and of the forty-ninth session of the Assembly.

II. REPLIES RECEIVED FROM MEMBER STATES

4. As at 16 November 1993, the following Member States had responded to the Secretary-General's note verbale of 20 May 1993: Austria, Bangladesh, Brazil, Canada, China, Cuba, Denmark (on behalf of the European Community), Finland (on behalf of the Nordic countries), Ghana, Japan, Mexico, Morocco, Panama, Poland, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America and Zimbabwe.

5. Many of the replies refer to peace and development as the major twin themes of international cooperation. They note the opportunity provided by an Agenda for Development to redress what is seen as a risk of marginalization of the United Nations system in the economic and social sphere, and of a widening gap between the objectives set out in an Agenda for Peace and the ability of the system to advance the goals of sustained and sustainable development.

6. An overriding objective of an Agenda for Development should thus be, in the view of many respondents, the enhancement of international cooperation for the sustained growth of the world economy and, in particular, the revitalization of growth and development of the developing countries.

7. Many replies state that an Agenda for Development should address the root causes of instability, which are often directly linked to poverty and underdevelopment. At the same time, the view is expressed that, despite its indisputable links with peace, security and stability, an agenda for development to overcome poverty and social exclusion and enhance the well-being of people deserves to be dealt with in its own right. While the importance of human rights and democratization are generally recognized, different views are expressed, and emphasis placed, on their relationship with economic and social development.

8. Most responses agree that an Agenda for Development (a) should be an instrument for integrating new areas of consensus for action into an overall framework, drawing on relevant intergovernmental agreements, declarations and programmes of action, and (b) should provide a substantive basis to strengthen coordination of activities within the United Nations system.

A. Agenda for development as an instrument for integrating new areas of consensus

9. Replies point to far-reaching changes taking place and trends emerging, which make it imperative for the international community to give renewed attention to the definition of development as a global issue and its place in the international agenda, and to review and reassess approaches to development at all levels.

10. In the same context, replies point to the growing globalization of the world economy and the increasing evidence of interdependence among countries and issues in the economic, social and environmental fields. They also highlight the gravity of the problems facing developing countries as well as the close interrelationships between sustained and sustainable development.

11. In the face of these changes and trends, areas of growing consensus are emerging. In this connection, replies highlight the integrative approach to ecological and economic issues developed at United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. They also refer to the growing consensus around the concept of people-centred development, which guarantees equity and sustainability. Forthcoming conferences and summits on population, women and social development should serve to expand these areas of consensus.

12. Many respondents view the main potential contribution of an Agenda for Development as helping to restore development cooperation as a central global concern, while promoting new, more comprehensive and effective approaches to development. It would do so by building on objectives and commitments adopted in the General Assembly and other international forums, assessing progress achieved and proposing ways and means of overcoming obstacles encountered, furthering emerging new areas of international consensus, and integrating them in the international framework.

13. The hope is expressed in many replies that, as part of a process of renewal and consensus building, an Agenda for Development should promote new partnerships among Governments, based on the recognition of sovereign equality, mutual interest and shared responsibility, as well as between Governments, the United Nations and other actors in development. In this connection, a further expansion of the development dialogue to include community organizations and non-governmental organizations, at both the national and international levels, is seen as increasingly essential to arrive at sound development strategies, based on popular participation and the needs of the people.

14. Replies propose various priority objectives to be addressed. Among them:

(a) Mobilizing new and additional financial resources, taking into account, inter alia, the light of the urgent needs of the least developed countries, as well as of the economies in transition;

(b) Promoting the fulfilment of commitments in the areas of trade, money and finance and macroeconomic policy coordination, and ensuring fuller participation of developing countries in international economic cooperation;

(c) Emphasizing investments in people;

(d) Advancing economic growth to foster long-term social progress, including income distribution;

(e) Alleviating demographic pressures;

(f) Promoting the participation of women in development.

B. Agenda for development as an instrument for enhancing coordination within the United Nations system

15. Noting that the economic and social sectors of the United Nations suffer from an unclear identity, insufficient visibility and credibility, and excessive fragmentation, a number of replies see an Agenda for Development as an important vehicle for better defining the purposes, goals and role of the United Nations in development, in a way which would enhance both the effectiveness of its own interventions and its ability to develop well-defined positions contributing to improved coordination within the United Nations system as a whole.

16. Some countries draw attention to what they see as the three main functions of the United Nations:

(a) A universal meeting place where all Members can raise issues for discussion and, hopefully, resolution;

(b) An instrument for analysis and information gathering and for the elaboration of and monitoring of adherence to international norms;

(c) A network of institutions entrusted with development as well as relief tasks in support of Member States.

17. Some replies also provide suggestions as to specific areas on which United Nations activities should focus. Among them:

(a) Introducing strengthened mechanisms for macroeconomic policy surveillance and monitoring;

(b) Overseeing issues relating to trade investments and commodities, including technology transfers and the fostering of greater technological cooperation among countries; addressing the emergence of new trade relationships, including trade-blocks and their impact on international trade;

(c) Helping reconcile market-oriented approaches to development with social protection, welfare and equity considerations;

(d) Addressing the role of foreign direct investments and transnational corporations in development;

(e) Advancing the sustainable development agenda;

(f) Assisting countries emerging from crisis situations in the rehabilitation phase and in setting their development agendas;

(g) Playing an advocacy role in the area of human capacity-building and furthering human resource development in developing countries, including as a means for their effective participation in international economic and trade relations;

(h) Building-up global databases in support of enhanced policy planning capacities in developing countries.

18. Replies reflect the expectation that, by promoting a more comprehensive and effective approach to development and a refocusing of the United Nations role and contribution, an Agenda for Development will, in turn, further the objective of greater coherence in the development activities of the system as a whole. Relationships, and the fostering of closer cooperation, between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions are highlighted in many replies as a key issue in this respect. In the same context, the role of the multilateral financial institutions in mobilizing resources for use in social development projects is stressed. The need for improved coordination in the work of agencies concerned, respectively, with development financing and environmental issues is likewise highlighted.

19. In general, the fostering of a greater "unity of purpose" within the United Nations and the system as a whole, in both the policy and operational spheres, is viewed as a crucial objective of an Agenda for Development.

III. SOME APPROACHES AND THEMES TO BE PURSUED IN AN AGENDA FOR DEVELOPMENT

20. In the light of the views put forward by Member States in different forums, and in response to the Secretary-General's note verbale, and taking into account ongoing discussions with programmes and agencies of the United Nations system, the Secretary-General wishes to offer some initial reflections on possible approaches to an Agenda for Development, and on some of the broad themes to be addressed in that report.

21. An Agenda for Development should not attempt to provide a new macroeconomic theory or seek to present an exhaustive analysis of the world economy. The most useful contribution which, in the Secretary-General's view, can be made at this stage through that report is to offer the international community an open working Agenda, which would be the beginning of a process rather than its end. In this perspective, its effectiveness should be judged, in the first instance, by the quality of the debate it generates and the follow-up given to it, through a process of discussion and consensus building, and the testing of new approaches.

22. In the post-colonial period, much of the impetus for development cooperation came from the bipolar competition. Today, that rationale has gone. The evidence, so far, is that the imperative of human solidarity does not have the mobilizing power of the cold war. Development appears to be slipping down the international agenda and risks to be increasingly marginalized in the face of short-term imperatives. An Agenda for Development should seek a reversal of these trends at all levels and help restore development to its rightful place at the top of the world agenda.

23. Economic growth is the mainspring of development. An acceleration of the rate of growth is a condition for expanding the resource base of the developing countries, and hence for economic, technological and social transformation.

24. In the continuum of the work of the United Nations for peace and development, preventive diplomacy seeks to avoid the breakdown of conditions of peace. At the other end of the continuum, post-conflict peace-building must involve efforts to identify and support structures which build trust and well-being among peoples. The promotion of economic and social development is crucial at both ends of the continuum.

25. Traditional approaches to development have failed to transform poor countries and countries in post-conflict situations. They have not succeeded to achieve growth in most developing countries and, more importantly, have failed to reduce poverty and to set the stage for sustainable progress. The assumption of conditions of peace, on which development strategies have traditionally been built, is in stark contrast with the actual situation prevailing in a growing number of countries in Africa, as well as elsewhere.

26. An Agenda for Development would thus complement An Agenda for Peace, by addressing the deeper foundations of global peace and security in the economic, social and environmental spheres.

27. One of the contributions of an Agenda for Development should be to bring out the new face of the world economy, stressing the globalization of economic flows, and taking stock of the increased interdependence among nations and issues.

28. Greater interdependence among nations, facilitated by liberalization and deregulation and driven by technological innovation, means that economic problems must, now more than ever before, be seen in a global perspective. The distinction between national and international economic policies is fading. Financial and trade flows and international cooperation in the area of technology need to be re-examined in this context.

29. Growing levels of interdependence also require a rethinking of the overall content of development cooperation. It is frequently equated with the concessional elements injected into the trade, finance and technology flows between developed and developing countries. These elements remain important. In this context, the consequences and impact of a premature reduction in the availability of official development assistance should not be underestimated. For many developing countries, however, trade, debt and private flows are equally, if not more, crucial. Development cooperation today must mean the integration of developing countries' concerns into all discussions of global trade, finance and technology cooperation.

30. During the past decade, only a few developing countries have been successful in expanding their exports and achieving self-reliance. For most of them, the full potential for enhancing export earnings through gains from trade liberalization has not yet been realized. Protectionism is still high and reduces the capacity of developing countries to generate additional financial resources for development through higher export earnings. A major factor inhibiting investment in export supply capabilities is uncertainty as to whether current access levels will be liberalized, curtailed or remain unchanged.

31. Technology, whether embodied in physical capital or in the knowledge processed by human beings, is a powerful engine for growth. Technology is also fundamental and the key element in the process of globalization. A sustained development process will not take place unless countries participate in the progress made possible by the rapid advances in science and technology that have characterized the global economy in recent years and will continue in the future. Technology has to be developed, deployed and shared, not just for promoting growth, but also for environmental management and poverty alleviation. Access to technology will be one of the determining factors for growth in the world economy. As the world becomes increasingly integrated, the comparative advantage of all nations is likely to rest on the skill, education and technical competence of their labour force.

32. Development must thus be seen as a shared concern of all nations, rich and poor, whatever their orientations. In addressing development as a key global issue, commonalities as well as the specificity of conditions and requirements must be fully borne in mind. One important commonality relates to the place of developing countries in the international economic system and their capacity to affect decisions which have sometimes a profound impact on opportunities for their economic and social development. There are, at the same time, specificities which must be clarified and addressed, if development support

actions are to have the necessary impact and meet the specific requirements of the countries concerned.

33. An important illustration in this respect is the particular problems being faced by countries in transition. This situation is common to a large number of countries, not only in Eastern Europe but also in Africa, Asia and Latin America, where the move to a more market-oriented system is being undertaken, with all the promise, but also all the difficulties, which this process implies.

34. A second illustration relates to the requirements of countries emerging from natural disasters. No geographical area is exempt. The challenge of effective international relief in such situations and of proceeding from relief to rehabilitation and the resumption of development will need to be addressed in an Agenda for Development.

35. A third example relates to the support requirements of countries which are in the midst of a conflict, be it the result of a civil war or an international conflict. The challenge of pursuing development efforts in such situations is a reality with which the United Nations is increasingly faced and which will have to be taken into account in an Agenda for Development.

36. A fourth illustration relates to the requirements of countries which are recovering from a conflict. Their special development needs are also not accounted for in traditional development theory and will need to be brought out in an Agenda for Development.

37. The need to pursue a more holistic view of development, fully encompassing economic as well as social dimensions, and the importance of taking into account the specificities of particular requirements and situations, should not preclude the identification of areas of concentration and priority themes for United Nations actions. Ways of enhancing the role of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council in promoting policy development at the national and regional levels and harmonizing policies at the international level in relation to these themes will need to be examined. The contribution of special conferences should be reviewed in the same context.

38. An assessment of development assistance policies and of the role of the United Nations in supporting the development of national capacities should, equally, form an important part of this debate, as should the contribution of the United Nations in promoting the role of the private sector and the development of entrepreneurship.

39. The search for more effective approaches to development and a sharpening of the role of the United Nations in development, should, in turn, provide the basis for an examination of ways of enhancing inter-agency coordination, including closer cooperation with the Bretton Woods institutions. In the same perspective, an Agenda for Development should include a discussion of the regional dimension of development, including the role of the regional commissions and relations with regional organizations outside the United Nations system.

* * *

40. The title of the report which the Secretary-General is to submit to the General Assembly will be "An Agenda for Development". The use of the indefinite article is significant. The contribution of each and every State, in the further elaboration of the Agenda will be vital. The presentation by the Secretary-General of an "open", "working" Agenda should be the beginning of a new process of dialogue where all States can contribute to the determination of their common future, and it should serve to generate a renewed debate among Member States as to the development themes and priorities to be addressed by the United Nations. This should, in turn, lead to a new sense of cohesion among all parts of the system.

41. The Secretary-General invites the views of the Member States on this approach.